

P R E L I M I N A R Y A G E N D A .

for the ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1959, to be held at the
CONWAY HALL, LONDON, on March 27th, 28th and 29th.

The following AMENDMENTS TO RULES and RESOLUTIONS have been submitted by Branches for the Agenda of the 1959 Conference and any amendments to these items should be sent to the STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE at HEAD OFFICE by not later than FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13th.

At the same time a call is herewith being made for ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION which Branches would like to see included in the Final Agenda. Such items must also reach the Committee not later than FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13th 1959.

Finally we would ask Branches for nominations for Conference Chairman. If possible please obtain confirmation of the agreement to stand as Chairman from the Comrade concerned and send it to the Committee together with the nomination. If this can not be done, please make sure to give the committee sufficient time to contact the member concerned on behalf of the Branch.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE.

January 23rd 1959.

If your Branch are submitting any amendments, please state voting at the branch meeting.

ITEMS SUBMITTED FOR THE PRELIMINARY AGENDA.

AMENDMENTS TO RULES.

- RULE 4. Paddington Branch : Delete on line 9 "showing member in good financial standing."
- RULE 12. Woodgreen and Hornsey Branch : Delete in line 6 "up to the 30th September" and the last three lines of the Rule beginning with the word "Vacancies" and ending with the word "resign."
- RULE 13. Woodgreen and Hornsey Branch : Addendum to the Rule as follows : "The ordinary evening meetings of the Executive Committee shall commence as soon as a quorum is present after 7.30 p.m. If there is no quorum by 8.00 p.m., no meeting shall be held. Members not seated at the Executive Committee table by 8.00 p.m. shall be marked absent."
- RULE 16. Paddington Branch: That the whole Rule be deleted.
- RULE 20. Fulham and Chelsea Branch: That the first sentence of the second paragraph reading "if demanded by any delegate a card vote shall be taken based upon the membership of the Branches represented " be deleted.
- RULE 28. Fulham and Chelsea Branch: That the words "only" on line 1 and "the full number of" on lines 2 and 3 be deleted.
- RULE 29. Fulham and Chelsea Branch: That the whole of the first sentence be deleted and the rest of the Rule be reworded to read as follows : "Candidates elected to a political office shall be pledged to act on the instructions of their Branches locally, and by the Executive Committee nationally."
- NEW RULE. Fulham and Chelsea Branch: "The delegates at the Conference shall discuss the items on the Conference Agenda presenting the views of their Branch, and -if at variance - the views of individual branch members, with the object of enabling the delegates present to make notes and to report back to their respective Branches the various opinions expressed.
When Branches have considered their delegates' reports (in conjunction with a precis report of the contributions to the discussion at the Conference, copies of which shall be sent to all Branches) the Branch shall then vote on a voting form which shall list all Resolutions and Recommendations raised at the Conference. Only those present in the Branch may vote. The voting forms shall be sent to Head Office and copies of a master form, showing totals of votes cast, shall be sent to all Branches."
In order to make this proposed new Rule operative RULE 22 to be amended by deleting "and vote" on line 7, and all after "Conference" on line 8.

RESOLUTIONS.

1. Woodgreen and Hornsey Branch: Appointment of Executive Committee etc.
That this Conference appoints a committee to investigate the method of election, scope and function of the Executive Committee. with a view to suggesting any

RESOLUTIONS (ctd.)2. Woodgreen and Hornsey Branch: Membership of Armed Forces.

That this Conference, whilst recognising that :

(a) our opposition to war derives from a socialist attitude and is not a pacifist one simply and solely arising from a principle of non-violence and that

(b) civilian members of capitalist society, because of the inter-related character of social production, may in some instances be engaged in tasks potentially more destructive and anti-social than some members of the armed forces - apart from the multitude of seemingly pacifist jobs (e.g. in agriculture etc.) which are essential to a military effort and desiring

to remove all possible obstacles to the sympathetic evaluation of the Party's ideas (especially amongst ^{those} at present engaged in well-meaning but theoretically unsound actions designed to encourage opposition to a future war)

RULES that membership of the armed forces be deemed incompatible with membership of the Party.

3. Islington Branch : That this Conference considers, that the function of the Socialist Standard is entirely the propagation of socialist ideas, and that the recent intrusion of poor quality articles, particularly those dealing with book, theatre, film and television reviews, are lowering the effectiveness of the Socialist Standard as a propaganda journal. The Socialist Standard in the view of this Conference, must aim at theoretical articles on socialist theory, i.e. economics, politics and history: and superficial articles and commentaries which do not substantially put the Party case should not be published.4. Paddington Branch: That this Conference holds the view that the Socialist Standard now forms the most important channel of propaganda and that the Party must be prepared to spend more money on the production, distribution and advertising of the Socialist Standard, even if this involves a greater loss on each issue. A minimum of £ 10 per month be allocated to advertise the Socialist Standard.5. Hackney and Paddington Branches: That this Conference holds that there should be a correspondence section in the Socialist Standard and therefore instructs the Executive Committee that

i Letters should be edited with regard to length and interest.

ii Letters from critics should - as now - be answered in the same issue of the Socialist Standard.

iii Appreciative and helpful letters, as well as critical ones, should be published, and members of the Party encouraged to send letters expressing constructive views.

6. Paddington Branch: That the Editorial Committee be enlarged to six members, all of whom will have equal responsibility for the production of the Socialist Standard.7. Hackney Branch : That the Executive Committee be instructed to increase the Editorial Committee to six members along the lines suggested in section 5 of the Socialist Standard Investigation Committee's report.8. Woodgreen and Hornsey Branch: Election Manifestos.

That this Conference instructs the Executive Committee to ensure that in any Election Manifestos this year our opposition to war and the testing of nuclear, or any other kind of weapons is made abundantly clear, whilst at the same time giving carefully considered arguments (showing familiarity with contemporary anti-nuclear-weapon literature), why we do not support movements seeking adherents on the grounds of opposition to a particular kind of warfare.

FINAL AGENDA

for the 55th ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1959 to be held
at CONWAY HALL, Red Lion Square, London W C 1
on FRIDAY, SATURDAY and SUNDAY, March 27-29th.

Commencing at 11 a.m. on FRIDAY;
at 2.30 p.m. on SATURDAY
at 11 a.m. on SUNDAY.

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- Item 1. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman.
2. Election of Tellers.
3. Report of Standing Orders Committee.
4. Report of the 1958 Executive Committee.
5. Amendments to Rules.
6. Resolutions.
7. Items for Discussion.
8. Any other Business.
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AMENDMENTS TO RULES.

- ✓ Rule 4. Paddington Branch : Delete on line 9 "showing member in good financial standing."
- ✗ Rule 12. Woodgreen and Hornsey Branch : Delete in line 6 "up to the 30th September" and the last three lines of the Rule beginning with the word "Vacancies" and ending with the word "resign."
- ✗ Rule 13. Woodgreen and Hornsey Branch : Addendum to the Rule as follows :
"The ordinary evening meetings of the Executive Committee shall commence as soon as a quorum is present after 7.30 p.m. If there is no quorum by 8.00 p.m. no meeting shall be held. Members not seated at the Executive Committee table by 8.00 p.m. shall be marked absent."
- ✓ Rule 16. Paddington Branch : That the whole Rule be deleted.
- Rule 20. Fulham and Chelsea Branch : That the first sentence of the second paragraph reading "if demanded by any delegate a card vote shall be taken based upon the membership of the Branches represented" be deleted.
- Rule 28. Fulham and Chelsea Branch : That the words "only" on line 1 and "the full number of" on lines 2 and 3 be deleted.
- Rule 29. Fulham and Chelsea Branch : That the whole of the first sentence be deleted and the rest of the Rule be reworded to read as follows:
"Candidates elected to a political office shall be pledged to act on the instructions of their Branches locally, and by the Executive Committee nationally."
- NEW RULE. Fulham and Chelsea Branch : "The delegates at the Conference shall discuss the items on the Conference Agenda presenting the views of their Branch, and - if at variance - the views of individual branch members, with the object of enabling the delegates present to make notes and to report back to their respective Branches the various opinions expressed.
When Branches have considered their delegates' reports (in conjunction with a precis report of the contributions to the discussion at the Conference, copies of which shall be sent to all Branches) the Branch shall then vote on a voting form which shall list all Resolutions and Recommendations raised at the Conference. Only those present in the Branch may vote. The voting forms shall be sent to Head Office and copies of a master form, showing totals of votes cast, shall be sent to all Branches.
In order to make this proposed new Rule operative RULE 22 to be amended by deleting "and vote" on line 7, and all after "Conference"

RESOLUTIONS.

MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANISATION.

1. Woodgreen and Hornsey Branch : Appointment of Executive Committee etc.
"That this Conference appoints a Committee to investigate the method of election, scope and function of the Executive Committee, with a view to suggesting any improvements that might be made.
That the Committee's report be duplicated and sent to all members."
2. Woodgreen and Hornsey Branch : Membership of Armed Forces.
" That this Conference, whilst recognising that :
 - a) our opposition to war derives from a socialist attitude and is not a pacifist one simply and solely arising from a principle of non-violence
 - and that
 - b) civilian members of capitalist society, because of the inter-related character of social production, may in some instances be engaged in tasks potentially more destructive and anti-social than some members of the Armed Forces - apart from the multitude of seemingly pacifist jobs (e.g. in agriculture etc.) which are essential to a military effort
 - and desiring
 - to remove all possible obstacles to the sympathetic evaluation of the Party's ideas (especially amongst those at present engaged in well-meaning but theoretically unsound actions designed to encourage opposition to a future war)RULES that membership of the armed forces be deemed incompatible with membership of the Party."

Amendment Camberwell and Islington Branches : Delete all after the word "Conference" in line 1 of the resolution up to the word "Rules" in line 17. (Amended Resolution to read : That this Conference rules that membership of the armed forces be deemed incompatible with membership of the Party.)

LITERATURE.

3. Islington Branch : "That this Conference considers that the function of the Socialist Standard is entirely the propagation of socialist ideas, and that the recent intrusion of poor quality articles, particularly those dealing with book, theatre, film and television reviews, are lowering the effectiveness of the Socialist Standard as a propaganda journal.- The Socialist Standard, in the view of this Conference, must aim at theoretical articles on socialist theory, i.e. economics, politics and history; and superficial articles and commentaries which do not substantially put the Party case should not be published."

Amendment Paddington Branch : That this Conference considers that the function of the Socialist Standard is entirely the propagation of socialist ideas; it should explain and comment upon world events in the widest sense of the term - that is, of what goes on around us. The main interest of the Socialist Standard must always be politics, economics and history."

4. Paddington Branch : "That this Conference holds the view that the Socialist Standard now forms the most important channel of propaganda and that the Party must be prepared to spend more money on the production, distribution and advertising of the Socialist Standard, even if this involves a greater loss on each issue. A minimum of £ 10 per month be allocated to advertise the Socialist Standard."

Amendment Islington Branch : Delete "A minimum of £ 10 per month be allocated to advertise the Socialist Standard." and insert instead "As much money as can be afforded be allocated to advertise the Socialist Standard."

5. Hackney and Paddington Branches : "That this Conference holds that there should be a correspondence section in the Socialist Standard and therefore instructs the Executive Committee that

- i. Letters should be edited with regard to length and interest.
- ii. Letters from critics should - as now - be answered in the same issue of the Socialist Standard.
- iii. Appreciative and helpful letters, as well as critical ones, should be published, and members of the Party encouraged to

RESOLUTIONS (continued)

Please mark in
this column "for"
or "against"

LITERATURE (continued)

5. Hackney and Paddington Branches :
FOR RESOLUTION SEE PAGE 2.

Amendment Glasgow-City Branch : Delete from clause iii the words "and members of the Party encouraged to send letters expressing constructive views."

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Amendment Hampstead Branch : Delete subsection iii.

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6. Paddington Branch : "That the Editorial Committee be enlarged to six members, all of whom will have equal responsibility for the production of the Socialist Standard."

. . . .

Amendment Bradford Branch : Delete "six" and insert instead "five"

. . . .

7. Hackney Branch : "That the Executive Committee be instructed to increase the Editorial Committee to six members along the lines suggested in section 5 of the Socialist Standard Investigation Committee's report."

. . . .

Amendment Bradford Branch : Delete "six" and insert instead "five"

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8. Woodgreen and Hornsey Branch : Election Manifestos.

"That this Conference instructs the Executive Committee to ensure that in any Election Manifestos this year our opposition to war and the testing of nuclear, or any other kind of weapons is made abundantly clear, whilst at the same time giving carefully considered arguments (showing familiarity with contemporary anti-nuclear-weapon literature), why we do not support movements seeking adherents on the grounds of opposition to a particular kind of war-fare."

. . . .

Amendment Hackney Branch : Delete "in any Election Manifestos this year" and insert instead "literature is prepared, making . . ." Further delete in line 3 of the resolution the words "is made".

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ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION SUBMITTED FOR THE CONFERENCE 1959.MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANISATION.

- A. Glasgow-City Branch } Head Office and Provincial Branches.
Kelvingrove Branch }
- B. Paddington Branch : The co-ordination and concentration of Party work at all levels to achieve the maximum result - to avoid the dissipation of much of our present effort.
- C. Woodgreen and Hornsey Branch : What type of Central Head Office does the Party want ?
- D. Hackney Branch : Methods adopted for joining the Party.

PROPAGANDA.

- E. Hackney Branch : Paid propaganda and methods of financing it.

LITERATURE.

- F. Glasgow-City Branch : Improvements to Party Literature.

PUBLICITY.

- G. Islington Branch : The value of advertising the Party and its pamphlets on the envelopes of all party postal correspondence.

MISCELLANEOUS

- H. Paddington Branch : The socialist attitude to rent control.

SOCIALIST PARTY OF GT. BRITAIN.

ISLINGTON BRANCH.

February 1959.

It is not the intention of this Branch to pass negative criticism on the Socialist Standard. Arising from complaints made to the E.C., we placed the following resolution on the Conference Agenda:-

"That this Conference considers that the function of the Socialist Standard is entirely the propagation of socialist ideas, and that the recent intrusion of poor quality articles, particularly those dealing with book, theatre, film and television reviews, are lowering the effectiveness of the Socialist Standard as a propaganda journal. The Socialist Standard, in the view of this Conference, must aim at theoretical articles on socialist theory, i.e. economics, politics and history; and superficial articles and commentaries which do not substantially put the Party case should not be published".

The Branch are not opposed in principle to reviews, if these are well done and the Socialist angle well put, not just tacked in at the end. In the past this Branch supported the resolutions dealing with the publication of reviews in the S.S. We are disappointed at the results, which are well below our expectations. One factor which influenced the Branch in bringing the matter to Conference was that the S.S. Investigation Committee wished to increase the volume of these bad reviews thus, from our point of view, making matters worse. The Branch are concerned at the poor quality of socialist writing these reviews and articles reflect.

Propaganda for Socialism is very specific. It means the transfer of our ideas to non-Socialists; our theories and principles must be stated, argued and applied. Economics, history and politics form the starting points. To write theoretical articles the members must have a good grounding in these subjects which, by the way, determine the positive 'Socialist attitude'. There is little point in saying that you cannot write interestingly about theoretical subjects. The founders of the Party proved that the reverse was true, as did the founders of Scientific Socialism. The writers of reviews and other superficial articles we complain of do not seem to have grasped the positive Socialist attitude; if they have it does not show in their articles. A positive Socialist approach means getting hold of the essentials in Capitalist society and sweeping aside the unimportant things.

There is no shortage of material for propaganda, and yet we restrict ourselves to visits to theatres and cinemas, and the fireside T.V. to receive our Socialist inspiration in order to write propaganda. A new cult seems to be arising in the Party. Those who want the Standard turned into a respectable journal which will not upset any readers. The recently published mediocrities only upset Socialists.

What point is there in building up personalities in the shape of novelists, playwrights and film directors? Are we dependent on the crumbs of their alleged genius for our case? This cheapens the Standard.

Excellent book reviews have appeared in the S.S. in the past. This type of article is the most difficult, demanding patience and concentration, and above all knowledge. In the main, theatrical plays, films and T.V. programmes have the social message removed or diluted from them before performance. That is, if they ever had any to begin with.

We prefer simple statements of the Party case instead of ostensibly clever articles which say nothing.

An inordinate amount of time has been spent by the Branch and the E.C. in dealing with complaints about articles. We are looking forward to the time when members will be busy selling the S.S. with the same enthusiasm as they criticise it.

We append to this circular a criticism of 11 articles taken from the S.S. over 4 months. This in our view is a fair cross section of the type of articles which are causing complaint.

OCTOBER, 1958.

Eugene Ionesco & The Defeatist Dilemma!

This is pure theatrical criticism. It largely concerns the individual problems of the muddle-headed long-winded Ionesco. The jungle of jargon and abstract philosophy makes reading difficult. Near the end of the article the writer talks about Ionesco theatre opposed to the whole Socialist philosophy. It might have helped if we were told what the Socialist philosophy was in this long article. The article should have remained in its place of origin 'Sunday Observer', 29th June, 1958.

'The Cause of It All'.

An amusing little story - nothing to do directly or indirectly with Socialism, its virtues else be they as pure as grace. We think this writer has the ability to tackle the real stuff of propaganda and write about Socialism.

NOVEMBER, 1958.

'Reflections on a Mirror'.

An article whose main point appears to establish that Socialists must give notice and space to T.V., presumably to review and comment on past programmes. For the rest, the article is a disjointed collection of odds without ends, apart from a comparison of the abilities of music-hall artists of yesteryear with the dud turns of the Six-Five special. Its only merit is its short size. Nothing to with propaganda.

'The Defiant Ones'.

This is a film review which ought to have appeared in the 'Picturegoer'. The producer is set up as a great artist who has made the grade and people want to see more of his work. Whatever the merit of this film it does not belong in the S.S. the extravagant compliments paid to Mr. Kramer may have to be amended in future issues of the S.S. when he produces a real jingo film. The article concedes that no film has been made that shows racialism for what it is, but goes on to praise the quality of the film. This is the scope of the review.

'Subject Normal'.

This article commences with a eulogy of the author's book 'History of Courting' (E.S.Turner).. There is no point at all to this review. The subject (courting) is piffling trivia compared to the task we have to tackle. We consider this a waste of time and effort. It is entirely out of place in the S.S.

DECEMBER, 1958.

'Quare Phenomena'.

This article says some quare things which we won't pretend to understand. The grasshopper reviews of two T.V. plays occupy between them six short sentences. Quite pointless and barely descriptive. There is also an air of superiority at the tail end of the article by drawing attention to the lack of knowledge of T.V. quiz contestants. Sarcasm and facetiousness do not look well in print.

'Wild Strawberries'.

Again, another eulogy of a film producer, Ingmar Bergman. A list of his film successes are given. There is nothing more boring than reading or listening to summaries of films. If the writer wants to write an article on the social causes of loneliness and the lack of kinship he should do so. He has stated that Bergman has not done it, but he, (the writer) enjoys the film. It might occur to some writers that Bergman is interested first in the box office, and is not in business to deal with social causes at all. What the writer is really telling us is what fine entertainment this film is. Is this the function of the S.S.? We are better qualified than Bergman, or any of the other box office soul searchers, to deal with human social problems of this kind. Why not deal with the real world instead of the world of celluloid?

'Borstal Boy'

This is a completely useless contribution to the S.S. The review deals with the shortcomings of Brendan Behan's book. The writer should have sent this review privately to Mr. Behan. It speaks sadly of our membership when interest is shown in the semi-fictional exploits of a mediocrity like Behan. There may be some hidden point in the article which we have not grasped. The article fills a space in the Standard, and gives Brendan Behan some free publicity. We should not punch butterflies on the nose.

JANUARY, 1959.

'Focus on Anti-Semitism'.

We have another hero - Arthur Miller - referred to as 'brilliant'. Compliments of this kind are usually uttered by the acting profession or sophisticated theatre-goers - "My dear, you were brilliant". We do not think Arthur Miller is brilliant, neither do we think he is capable of dealing adequately with the problem of anti-semitism, if this book provides any guide. It seems that all these people like Miller are 'brilliant' because they leave anything they tackle unfinished and usually very muddled. Again, why not an article on anti-semitism? Arthur Miller's 'brilliance' becomes insignificant alongside the Party's Racial pamphlet. We live in the world of fact, yet we deal with fiction.

'Credit and Debit'

This writer seems to spend much of his time looking at T.V. The remainder of his time seems to be devoted to impressing on S.S. readers the importance of T.V. This is the third time this has been stated in his articles. We are asked to discuss the question "Is Television worth while? An appalling question this; but it happens to be the important one". We decline to answer questions of this kind, which tend to put us in a literary straight-jacket. T.V. could be used for Socialist propaganda - it isn't, so as far as we are concerned there are no important questions to discuss. If, of course, the writer has in mind the technical achievements of T.V. we do not object to that, any more than we object to the Law of Gravity. Again, we do not know what is the point of this article. It resembles a gossip column which travels but never arrives. Much of the stuff which appears on T.V. is pure entertainment which does not usually entertain, as is the case with this article. Articles of this kind should not be published in the S.S.

'Tuppence Coloured'

An improbable little story. The main point appears to establish that coloured people with property are usually respected by propertyless whites. This should have appeared in a school magazine, not the S.S.

SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN
Wood Green & Hornsey Branch

To:- All Branches

3rd March 1959

CONFERENCE FINAL AGENDA

Comrades,

You will note that we have a number of items on the Conference Agenda this year. Some of them are self-explanatory, whilst others need a little enlargement. Following are our comments on the items that come within the second category -

Amendment to Rule 12

The portions that we have moved to delete are a hangover from the time when any vacancy that occurred on the E.C. during the year had to be balloted for, with a second ballot if one candidate failed to get a clear majority over all the others. This was a lengthy process, taking from two to three months. Hence it was not considered worth-while to go through with it, if a vacancy occurred late in the year.

Nowadays, when a vacancy occurs, the seat goes to the next comrade on the list of unsuccessful candidates in the Annual Ballot. Thus a seat does not remain vacant for more than one week, and there is no longer any reason why empty seats should not be filled right up to the end of the year.

Addendum to Rule 13

It may seem that we are proposing to interfere with something that is purely a domestic concern of the E.C. Nowadays, however, there is considerable competition for the 14 seats round the E.C. table, and we feel that it is time to raise the qualifications somewhat.

Normally the E.C. functions from approximately 8.00 p.m. to 10.30 p.m. on 13 nights per Quarter, making a total of 32½ hours per Quarter - not a lot of time for the administrative work of a small but busy organisation! But, even if our Addendum is added to Rule 13 it will still be possible for an E.C. member to absent himself from six meetings per quarter, or 15 hours, without penalty. Further, there will still be nothing to prevent him from leaving the E.C. table during a meeting, and thus reducing his total attendance still more.

We are trying to resolve a difference of opinion that is apparent amongst E.C. members and others who work at our awkwardly-situated Head Office. The first school of thought realises that a leisurely meal at home is impossible if work is to be done. A snack in a cafe or the H.O. Canteen must take its place.

The other school of thought puts eating first and Party Business second - even if this means that arrival at H.O. is deferred until 8.15, 8.30 or even later. With members in general this does not matter much, but, as far as the E.C. is concerned, it means that they are frequently not at full strength until the evening's business is half over. It also means that the more punctual members must often sit patiently awaiting a quorum, even until after 8.00 p.m., when their own Standing Orders tell them that a meeting cannot be held.

Amendment to Fulham & Chelsea's Proposed New Rule

We have been told by the Standing Orders Committee that this is not, strictly speaking, an Amendment. But we are pressing it nevertheless.

We can see the merits of the proposed new rule, but to those who know the small number of Comrades who get to Clapham with any regularity, and the still smaller number with any clerical experience, it is apparent that the annual task proposed would break the hearts of the most willing members.

Possibly, with the acquisition of a Central Head Office, and the increased regular attendance that can be expected to follow, we shall find that we have the man- and woman-power to undertake the work.

Professional aid might be sought, but we feel that this would be very expensive - out of all proportion to the advantages to be gained.

We are rather dubious about the suggestion to "send a precis of the Conference proceedings" to all Branches. We recollect that one of our members spoke for ten minutes on one item at the last Conference. The "precis" of his contribution amounted to one line in the Conference Report!

Resolution Regarding Methods of Appointing the E.C.

The E.C. meets nowadays in a part of London that few members can visit with any regularity. We would guess that, out of more than 300 Ballot Papers returned at the last Poll, not more than one-third were filled in by members who had attended any E.C. meetings during the past few years.

It may be that a committee such as it is suggested the Conference should appoint, may not be able to suggest any improvement on the present methods, except perhaps to endorse the view of this Branch - that the sooner we get to a central Head Office, where more members can attend regularly - the better.

What Type of Central Head Office Does the Party Want?

We start from the fact that our present H.O., in a southern suburb far away from the commercial, educational and political centre of London, cost £4,000 in a dilapidated condition. Because, for most members, a major journey is involved in getting there, it is not used to anything like a full extent.

The 1957 Conference was quite definite in expressing a desire for a central H.O., but now, two years later, we are still stuck at Clapham.

The E.C. has made its views clear in the current Terms of Reference for the New Premises Committee, into the name of which they have slid the word 'Investigation' for some reason. According to them, the new premises must not be inferior to the present ones in size, condition or amenities. A little thought will lead one to the conclusion that, if these conditions are to be met, the new premises are likely to cost more than £4,000 - probably much more.

The view of this Branch has been that, considering the limited amount of H.O. activity that goes on at present, much more modest premises would be adequate. Our search has been along these lines, leading to the somewhat heated and impolite exchanges between this Branch and the E.C. in the past.

We also realise that a central H.O. would certainly lead to more central activity, and

1959 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

To every Member and Branch

Comrades,

Paddington Branch have placed a number of items on the 1959 Conference Agenda, and this circular summarises our views. For convenience only the comment has had to be separated under each resolution, but as much of the matter is related it would be better to consider this circular as a whole, especially the section dealing with the Socialist Standard.

Amendments to Rules

Rule 4 Delete on line 9 "showing member in good financial standing"

Each member is of equal standing in the Party with identical rights and obligations. Rules are not restrictions but are minimum codified procedures to achieve the maximum working efficiency. Rule 9 is in need of amendment because it places on Central Branch members a restriction that does not apply to other Party members. Rule 2, if correctly used, provides all the safeguards we require.

Rule 16 The whole Rule be deleted.

This Rule is not necessary. When the Party was founded the character our Rules took was effected by the unfortunate experience of the Social Democratic Federation. In that body the Executive flaunted their position, determined policy, monopolised conferences and stifled criticism. This was not going to occur in the SPGB; Conferences were to be the expression of the whole membership through the branches.

Rule 16 has become an anachronism. Our Executive Committee is only a working committee carrying out Party and Conference decisions. If this rule is logical it would equally apply to all Party officials, and the Treasurer, Central Organiser, Auditors and Trustees would be prevented from becoming Conference delegates. The Rules, ofcourse, make no such stipulation.

Delegates represent their branches, and branches make sure that delegates express their views accurately. Is there is any reason why members who sit on the Executive Committee should be less able to do this than any others?

On the Rules in general: although our Rules have a number of anomalies that require amendment few changes are ever accepted by the Party.

One reason for this is that the branches who propose them rarely state why. Amendments to rules can be as important as other resolutions, and branches should exercise their right to speak up for them at Conference (for some reason this has been discouraged) and also circularise their views before hand. In this way the Party can properly consider their merits.

Socialist Standard

Paddington Branch's items on the Socialist Standard are closely related, and arise directly from recommendations of the SS Investigation Committee, with whose Report we fundamentally agree.

The Report proposes a comprehensive plan for improving the Socialist Standard. We do not argue all the points here, that has already been adequately done; instead we comment on the three resolutions and one amendment we have placed before the Annual Conference in the order they appear on the Agenda.

4 Amendment to Islington Resolution

Islington Branch's Resolution, to say the least, is not at all helpful. Poor quality articles are not a "recent intrusion" in the Socialist Standard. Over the years: members, branches, conferences and the Editorial Committee have continually complained about the poor quality of articles on every subject. Paddington Branch have collected from the Socialist Standard over many years a sorry collection of thoroughly bad articles on "Economics", "Politics" and "History"

Why single out "book, theatre, film and television reviews"? What meaning can have "Economics", "Politics" and "History" when separated from the way people live? Nothing that goes on around us can be alien to socialists.

The raising of the quality of writing for the Socialist Standard is a problem that concerns everyone who is seriously interested in the progress of the Party. We can do no better than quote from the SS Committee's Report:

"The Committee agreed that the Editorial Committee should aim at raising the quality of the articles in the Socialist Standard in all ways, and the right to reject and edit articles should be exercised more widely than at present. In discussion of the contents and quality of articles, the Committee considered the question of the expression of personal views. The Committee holds that the Socialist Standard should, as it has always done, put the Party case on matters directly concerned with principles and policy, with latitude for personal judgements on matters not thus concerned.

"...It is assumed that the main interest of the Standard must always be politics, economics and history. In recent years, however, its interest has been extended and has taken in many aspects of social activity and related them to the Party case. It is not possible to define boundaries for subject-matter, because the important factor is

always the writer's treatment of the subject. The Committee's view is that this widening of the horizon is a good thing and should go on, provided that the standard of the articles is high and that the Socialist Standard remains predominantly a political paper. The aim of the features and editorials should always be to give Socialist comment upon and analysis of political and social questions."

We agree with this. Our amendment to Islington's resolution reads:

"That this Conference considers that the function of the Socialist Standard is entirely the propagation of socialist ideas; it should explain and comment upon world events in the widest sense of the term -- that is, all that goes on around us. The main interest of the Socialist Standard must always be politics, economics and history."

This is a positive statement which can be a useful guide to Party writers and the Editorial Committee.

Resolution 4

"This Conference holds the view that the Socialist Standard now forms the most important channel of propaganda and that the Party must be prepared to spend more money on the production, distribution and advertising of the Socialist Standard, even if this involves a greater loss on each issue. A minimum of £10 per month be allocated to advertise the Socialist Standard."

The decline of outdoor meetings makes the Party more and more dependent on written propaganda and especially the Socialist Standard. Providing we are alive to this and can adapt our organisation to present day conditions, our activity need in no way be crippled.

By co-ordinating Party activity around the production and distribution of the Socialist Standard our activity can increase and influence spread, providing ofcourse the quality of what we say is of the highest. We suggest for example: there should be a tie-up between the content of the current Socialist Standard and the content of outdoor propaganda; lecture series should run parallel with similar themes in the Socialist Standard; educational classes should more directly be concerned with expressing socialist ideas in writing as well as orally; Party publicity through the press and other channels should centre specifically around the Socialist Standard; special Party statements and small pamphlets should become supplements to the Socialist Standard.

The Socialist Standard has for too long been regarded as the poor relation when we allocate funds. The economics of publishing a small journal make it almost impossible to run without subsidy. No one questions the soundness of spending funds on indoor meetings and advertising. No one demands that these pay their way. Money so spent is rightly regarded as well spent. This same attitude must be made to the Socialist Standard.

The circulation of most journals depend mainly on subscribers and sales through the bookstalls. The Socialist Standard is one of the exceptions, it depends on the few members who regularly canvass. Canvassing

is a very useful way of extending sales, but forms a precarious basis for a permanent circulation.

The Party, in our view, must continually campaign for subscribers, and take determined steps to persuade wholesale distributors, bookstalls and newsagents to sell the Socialist Standard. This will mean having to offer them very favourable terms. Would, for example, W.H. Smith be more disposed to us if we offered them 1500 Socialist Standards a month on any terms they insisted for a set trial period? The best advertisement the Socialist Standard can have is to appear on the bookstalls.

Our resolution asks that a minimum of £10 per month be spent on advertising the Socialist Standard. What a pitifully small amount! Dare we hope that we will be taken to task for our timidity?

Resolution 5

"This Conference holds that there should be a correspondence section in the Socialist Standard and therefore instructs the Executive Committee that:

- 1) Letters should be edited with regard to length and interest.
- 2) Letters from critics should - as now - be answered in the same issue of the Socialist Standard.
- 3) Appreciative and helpful letters, as well as critical ones should be published, and members of the Party encouraged to send letters expressing constructive views."

This resolution implements the Socialist Standard Investigation Committee's recommendation. The fears of some Party members about the 1957 Conference Resolution on Correspondence, are fully allowed for.

A lively and regular correspondence page properly run would be a great asset to the Socialist Standard. It would bring reader and writer closer together; it would bridge issues by continuing discussion on subjects that have been raised.

For some reason the Socialist Standard publishes mainly uninformed and dull letters. Let us have more cheerful, helpful, appreciative and informed correspondence. And above all, don't let's repeat the mistake of two years ago. Then, a basically sound proposal for a regular correspondence was woefully mishandled by the Editorial Committee, who without discretion printed a series of letter from crackpots. Needless to say this only had a dispiriting effect on members.

Resolution 6

"The Editorial Committee be enlarged to six members, all of whom will have equal responsibility for the production of the Socialist Standard."

The whole conception and working of the Editorial Committee would have to be radically changed if the Party is to make a success of the proposals for a better Socialist Standard.

The Editorial Committee's main function at the moment is to edit articles to be in line with the Party case, to be factually correct, to be without libel, also to ensure that the Socialist Standard appears regularly. The Editorial Committee's work, we suggest, should also include:

- Long term planning of issues,
- Training and encouraging of writers,
- Preparing special issues and supplements,
- Regular meetings with writers and others concerned with the Standard,
- Close liason with other Party activity.

The Editorial Committee should also be interested in the layout and printing of the Socialist Standard, but the member directly concerned with the layout of each issue, should not be on the Committee; he would primarily be doing a technical job.

Can three members successfully handle all this work? We suggest that an Editorial Committee of six is necessary. This number can be a working proposition providing its composition is carefully planned. On this we make a number of suggestions:

To achieve maximum smoothness in working there must be a division of function, although each member should have equal responsibility in the final selection of articles for each issue;
 Specific tasks -- for example: corresponding with writers, organising classes, meeting the printer, preparing special issues, promotion of sales -- would be divided among themselves conveniently as possible;
 One of the Editorial Committee would act as secretary, whose duties would include the co-ordinating of all the work;

The Committee should meet weekly, and at least one meeting a month should be open to writers and others concerned with the Standard. At these open meetings future issues would be discussed, work allocated, criticisms aired.

What type of members do we need on the Editorial Committee? They should all be good writers and widely read, with extensive knowledge of Party history and socialist theory. Some of the members, at least, should be good teachers, able to deal patiently and understandingly with the problems of writers -- able to criticise yet encourage.

Editorial members should be familiar with the best of modern journalism, have enthusiasm for their work, and imagination enough to know that revolutionary socialism requires revolutionary journalism.

Paddington Branch / 6 March 1959